

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

COMMISSION MASTER LIST – WILDLIFE

July 12, 2012

2012 – 2013 Wolf Season, Quotas and HD Boundaries – Final

Proposal elements highlighted in grey represent differences from previous proposed adoptions.

2012 will mark Montana's third wolf hunt, the second since the last delisting, and the second of the 5 year monitoring period by the USFWS. Montana also has perhaps the most complex predator-prey system in North America in terms of diversity of predator and prey species. From the first two hunting seasons we have learned much and can refine management. With the close of the 2011-2012 season, Montana still had an increase in the number of wolves in the state. While FWP does not have an overall population objective for wolves, it is clear that a more aggressive wolf hunting season will not hurt wolf populations or genetic diversity. It is the second year post-delisting of the five year monitoring period required by the USFWS. All recommendations within this proposal are consistent with the Montana Grey Wolf Management Plan as approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. It is not a time for a radical departure from the grounded incremental approach Montana has taken from the beginning. Montana has been generally well respected in its balanced approach to wolf management, despite viral attacks from both sides of this controversial management issue.

FWP proposes a number of changes from the 2011 wolf season framework:

- The 2012 wolf season proposal includes several adjustments to the 2011 Wolf Management Units (WMUs). The proposal incorporates all of the Bitterroot into WMU 250 and removes that portion from WMU 210. The proposal also removes that portion of old WMU 210 that is east of the Continental Divide (the Big Hole/Tendoy) and defines that area as new WMU 330. Finally, Deer/Elk HDs 280 and 316 would become separate WMUs 280 and 316, with those areas removed as subunits within WMUs 290 and 390.
- The proposal replaces posted quotas in most WMU's with a statewide general season. The exceptions include retaining quotas in WMU 110 (quota = 2) and WMU 316 (quota = 3). Mandatory harvest reporting would remain. This large management scale is consistent wolf biology and the current population size.
- The Commission would authorize FWP to initiate season closures at any time. Closures may be implemented if FWP deems monitored harvest levels excessive in any area. If harvest levels at the recovery area scale exceed the population model harvests predicted at the 60% harvest rate, FWP would review a potential closure in a recovery Area or individual WMU(s) within a recovery area. Recovery area harvest levels at the 60% rate in the population model are: NWMT = 206, CID = 82, GYA = 76. Other considerations would include depredation removals, daily harvest rates, number of days left in the season, and harvest levels in adjacent recovery areas or adjacent WMU's. Any such closure would necessarily include an appropriate timeline and public notice and that may include press releases and posted signs. Anticipated rate of harvest allows this approach. In this manner, the core functionality represented by pre-posted quotas as a means to close a harvest season if biologically necessary would remain in place.
- Extend the general season closing date from December 31 to February 28. Hunter orange would not be required to hunt wolves after November 25, 2012. Add a trapping season along with mandatory trapper education. Allow those who attended the Idaho wolf

trapping course to trap wolves in Montana without attending the Montana wolf trapping course.

- The trapping season would run from December 15 to February 28. Adjust mandatory reporting period to 24 hours. The 24 hour reporting requirement would be relaxed to 24 hours from arrival at the trailhead in backcountry areas, except in WMU 316 which has a harvest quota. Addition of requirements for reporting and required procedures for trappers that capture non-target, protected wildlife and domestic dogs.
- Increase the fall 2012 bag limit to three wolves, one of which could be taken via hunting. A wolf trapper would need a trapping license to trap up to three wolves. A wolf hunter would need a wolf license to hunt a wolf.
- Electronic calling for taking wolves must be consistent with relevant statute (see next bullet below).
- If relevant statutes are adjusted during any part of the 2012-13 wolf season relative to bag limit, electronic calling and waste of game, FWP proposes here that the bag limit be increased at that time to three wolves per hunter/trapper in any combination of hunting and/or trapping harvest. Similarly, electronic calling for taking wolves is proposed to be available at that time if consistent with relevant statute.
- Hunter/trapper retrieval of harvested wolf parts must be consistent with relevant statute.

Otherwise, the 2012-13 season has similarities with the 2011-12 framework.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

1. *Maintain a viable and connected wolf population in Montana.*
 2. *Gain and maintain authority for State of Montana to manage wolves.*
 3. *Maintain positive and effective working relationships with livestock producers, hunters, and other stakeholders.*
 - 4a. *Reduce wolf impacts on livestock.*
 - 4b. *Reduce wolf impacts on big game populations.*
 - 4c. *Maintain sustainable hunter opportunity for wolves.*
 - 4d. *Maintain sustainable hunter opportunity for ungulates.*
 5. *Increase broad public acceptance of sustainable harvest and hunter opportunity as part of wolf conservation.*
 6. *Enhance open and effective communication to better inform decisions*
 7. *Learn and improve as we go.*
- Harvest quotas would be 2 in WMU 110 and 3 in WMU 316. These quotas would be retained to continue to address concerns over potentially high harvests near the boundaries of Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks. FWP proposes replacing all other quotas with a general season and to maintain the daily tracking of harvest among WMU's. All wolf harvests would be required to be reported within 24 hours to ensure harvest monitoring capacity. The 24 hour reporting requirement would be relaxed to 24 hours from arrival at the trailhead in backcountry areas, except in WMU 316 which has a harvest quota.

Proposed wolf season dates would remain similar to the 2011-12 framework, with a later closing date. The wolf archery season would extend from September 1 through the close of the archery elk season. In most WMU's, the general wolf season would run from October 15 through February 28. In WMU's 150 and 316, along with subunit 280 of WMU 290, the general wolf season would open earlier on September 15 to coincide with the early opening of the backcountry elk season.

FWP proposes a trapping season during 2012-13. FWP proposes the following trapping framework and rules:

Statewide Trapping Season: December 15, 2012 - February 28, 2013

Wolf Trapper Orientation – A person must attend a wolf trapping orientation class before setting any trap for a wolf. A certifying letter or validated license will be awarded to those completing trapping orientation session. This certification must be in possession of any person setting wolf traps and/or harvesting a wolf by trap.

Checking and Placing Traps – Traps are required to be visually checked at least once every 48 hours. Failure to pick up traps at the end of the trapping season or attending them in a manner that wastes animals constitutes a misdemeanor per Montana law.

Trap Identification – Metal identification tags must be fastened to all traps. Metal tags must bear the name and address of the trapper OR a personal identification number, which is the trapper's date of birth and ALS number. Tags should be attached to the end of the chain or other anchoring material at the end farthest from the portion of the device which holds the animal. Landowners who trap on their own lands and irrigation right-of-way contiguous to their land do not need to tag traps.

Trapping Equipment Requirements– Foot-hold traps are legal methods during the wolf trapping season. The inside jaw spread of foothold traps must not exceed nine inches. Conibears or snares may not be used to take wolves.

Legal Hours – Trappers will be allowed to dispatch trapped wolves during all hours including night time. A trapper must immediately dispatch any wolf captured while the trapper holds a valid license authorizing harvest of a wolf.

Landowner Permission – Trappers must obtain permission of the landowner, lessee or their agent before trapping on private land.

Exposed Carcass or Bait – No trap may be set within 30 feet of an exposed carcass or bait that is visible from above. Exposed carcass or bait is defined as the meat or viscera of a mammal, bird or fish, or any part thereof more than one pound in weight. Bleached bones are excluded.

Public Land Roads and Trails – A 50-foot setback is required for foothold traps along open roads and hiking trails on federal and state lands that are designated by administrative signs or numbers.

Public Land Trailheads – On public land, foothold traps are prohibited within 300 feet of a designated or marked trailhead (accessible by highway vehicle).

Public Land Campground – On public land, foothold traps are prohibited within 1000 feet of a designated campground or fishing access site (accessible by highway vehicle).

Occupied Dwellings – Foothold traps are prohibited within 1,000 feet of an occupied dwelling without written notification of the occupant.

Waste of Game –Wolf is excluded from being considered as “suitable for food” under big game regulations. A hunter or trapper that legally harvests a wolf and wishes to retain possession of the

hide and skull is required to personally present the hide and skull of a legally taken wolf to a designated FWP employee within ten (10) days after harvest. Evidence of sex must be naturally attached for inspection and tagging purposes. If not released, the hide and skull of incidentally captured wolves must be personally presented to a designated FWP employee within ten (10) days after harvest (see Incidental Take below). The carcass of any wolf taken may be taken in possession or left in the field. Retrieval of harvested wolf parts must be consistent with relevant statute.

Incidental Take – Trappers may not set traps to capture wolves unless they possess a valid trapping license authorizing wolf harvest and have proof of a completed Montana wolf trapper orientation. Wolf traps must be removed within 24 hours of validating a wolf license on an individual trapper's last legally harvested wolf. A trapper must immediately dispatch and validate the wolf license for the first wolf captured while in possession of an unused and valid wolf license. If a wolf trapper incidentally catches a wolf beyond the legal limit and the wolf is uninjured the trapper must contact FWP within 12 hours to potentially have the wolf fitted with a radio collar and released to assist FWP in management efforts. Depending upon circumstances that may include history of livestock depredations in the area and other radio collars already in place, FWP may prescribe these wolves be lethally removed. All incidentally captured wolves that are injured must be dispatched by the trapper immediately. All incidentally captured wolves that are dispatched must be reported within 24 hours with the skull and pelt presented to FWP within 10 days. It is unlawful for any person to retain possession of an incidentally taken wolf as per Montana law.

Non-Target Species – Incidental captures of non-target wildlife such as protected birds or mammals, that cannot be legally possessed and that are uninjured, shall be released immediately on site. Trappers that incidentally capture protected animals that cannot be legally possessed and that cannot be released uninjured, must immediately notify a designated Fish, Wildlife & Parks employee or an FWP regional office, to determine disposition and/or collection of the animal.

Capture of Domestic Dogs – To improve the understanding of accidental dog captures in traps, trappers must report such captures, excluding a trapper's dog, to an FWP regional office within 48 hours of identifying the capture.

Disturbing Traps or Trapped Animals – It is unlawful to destroy, disturb or remove any trap or trapped wildlife belonging to a trapper without permission of the owner of the trap per Montana law.

Procedures to Follow Upon Harvesting a Wolf

- Immediately after killing a wolf, a hunter must cut out the proper month and date of the kill from the appropriate license and attach it to the hide in a secure and visible manner. This is "validating" the license. All legally taken wolves must have a validated license affixed in this manner.
- To properly validate a license, locate the appropriate month and date the animal was killed and completely cut away (notch out) the month and the first and second digits of the date designations. Removing more than one month or one date designation invalidates the license.
- Evidence of sex must remain naturally intact on the hide.
- A hunter or trapper must personally report any and all wolf kills within 24 hours by calling the Wolf Reporting Number at 1-877-FWP-WILD or 1-877-397-9453 so that FWP can monitor harvest levels. This includes incidental captures that are dispatched. Hunters or trappers are required to provide: name, telephone number, ALS number, species, date of harvest, WMU, deer/elk HD, specific location (legal description), and sex when reporting a wolf harvest. When reporting a wolf harvest, it is unlawful to subscribe to or make any statement that is materially false.
- Upon discovering a wolf in a trap they have set, trappers are required to immediately dispatch any wolf that will not be released.

- A trapper or hunter is required to personally present the hide and skull of an incidentally trapped wolf and any legally harvest wolf for which they wish to retain possession of the skull and/or hide to a designated FWP employee within ten (10) days after harvest.

A hunter or trapper that legally harvests a wolf and wishes to retain possession of the hide and skull or incidentally captures a wolf that must be dispatched is required to personally present the hide and skull to a designated FWP employee within ten (10) days after harvest for the purpose of:

- Inspection and registration of kill to include harvest location and other details,
- Verify evidence of sex,
- Tagging the hide. The hide tag must thereafter remain attached to the hide until tanned or after export.
- Any hide and skull not presented or registered to FWP personnel within ten (10) days of harvest are subject to confiscation.
- It is unlawful for anyone to possess, ship, transport, sell or purchase any wolf, or part thereof, unless the animal has been tagged as prescribed.

A hunter or trapper that legally harvests a wolf and does not wish to retain possession of the hide and skull if allowed by statute is required to personally present the above harvest information to a designated FWP employee within ten (10) days after harvest. Retrieval of wolf parts must be consistent with relevant statute.

FWP will rigorously track wolf harvest through the mandatory harvest reporting system and provide updates to the FWP Commission. Under this proposal, the Commission would authorize FWP to initiate closures in any geographic area at any time if FWP deems harvest excessive. If harvest levels at the recovery area scale exceed the population model harvests predicted at the 60% harvest rate, FWP would review a potential closure in a recovery Area or individual WMU(s) within a recovery area. Recovery area harvest levels at the 60% rate in the population model are: NWMT = 206, CID = 82, GYA = 76. Other considerations would include depredation removals, daily harvest rates, number of days left in the season, and harvest levels in adjacent recovery areas or adjacent WMU's.

Some elements of the previous wolf season structure assured safety nets were incorporated so that regulated public hunting would not jeopardize wolf population long term viability. The proposed 2012 season structure retains many fundamental features from earlier season structures listed below.

1. Mandatory reporting of successful harvest within 24 hours (formerly 12 hours) so FWP can closely monitor hunter success and harvest levels while addressing backcountry logistics. The 24 hour reporting requirement would be relaxed to 24 hours from arrival at the trailhead in backcountry areas, except in WMU 316 which has a harvest quota.
2. Harvest monitoring by WMU (includes deer/elk HD within those WMUs).
3. The Commission would authorize FWP to initiate season closures at any time. Closures would be implemented if FWP deems harvest levels excessive in any area.
4. Mandatory pelt/skull inspection within 10 days.
5. Definite season-ending closure date.
6. Baits, scents and dogs may not be used to hunt wolves. Electronic calls may not be used unless authorized by legislation.
7. Adopt season structure annually to better adapt and respond. This proposed season structure is for the 2012 wolf season. Any proposed season for 2013 will be developed, proposed, publicly reviewed and adopted after the 2012 season has concluded.

Other elements proposed include:

- 1 . A hunting season beginning with the start of the general archery season and running through February 28, 2013.
- 2 . The trapping season would run from December 15 through February 28 in all WMU's.
- 3 . The wolf archery season would be concurrent with the elk archery season in each WMU or subunit.
- 4 . Clarification that the regular rifle season (non-backcountry) would begin on October 15th. September 15 would be the start for rifle seasons in backcountry areas of WMUs 150, 280 and 316. The rifle season would close in all WMU's not later than February 28, 2013.
- 5 . Licenses proposed to remain over-the-counter general sale to residents and nonresidents.
- 6 . Any licensed hunter or trapper may take only one wolf in this proposed hunting season unless modified via legislation. If allowed by adjusted legislation, a licensed hunter or trapper could take up to three wolves in any combination of hunting or trapping.

All other season elements not specifically noted are proposed to be unchanged from 2011.

Nongame Check-off Work Plan – Final

FWP is proposing the following work in FY13 with this anticipated funding:

\$15,000 - Prioritize habitat for conservation including 1) identifying the most critical habitat needs for nongame, threatened or endangered species, 2) identifying and monitoring threats to these critical habitats.

\$15,000 - Inventory, monitoring and conservation work on species of concern including bald eagles, common loons, bats, and amphibians.

\$5,000 - Competitive student stipend for nongame research.

2012 HB 454 Hunting Access Agreements – Final

Swanz Access Agreement – No proposed change from 2011 or from previous proposed adoption.

2012 Fall Upland Game Bird Quotas and Limits – Final

No proposed change from previous adoptions.

2012 Antlerless Elk Harvest Prescriptions for Elk Archery Bundle Hunting Districts - Final

BREAKS

HD 410 – 300 antlerless elk

HD 417 – 85 antlerless elk

HDs 620/621/622 – 400 antlerless elk combined

HD 700 – 205 antlerless elk

OUTSIDE BREAKS

HDs 401/403 – 50 antlerless elk combined

HD 450 – 50 antlerless elk

HDs 411/511/530 – 375 antlerless elk combined

HD 412 – 150 antlerless elk
 HD 426 – 25 antlerless elk
 HD 447 – 300 antlerless elk
 HDs 500/570 – 45 antlerless elk combined
 HDs 502/510 (west of Hwy 310) – 15 antlerless elk combined
 HD 520 (south and east of West Fork of Rock Crk) - 35 antlerless elk
 HD 575 – 25 antlerless elk (east of Stillwater River), 80 antlerless elk (west of Stillwater River)
 HD 580 (south of Sweetgrass Creek) – 110 antlerless elk
 HD 590 and portion of HD 701 north of the Yellowstone River, south of Hwy 12 and west of Sumatra-Myers Rd. – 225 antlerless elk (Bull Mtns), 45 antlerless elk (Pine Ridge)
 HD 702 – 50 antlerless elk
 HD 704 -- 115 antlerless elk
 HD 705 – 45 antlerless elk

Early Season Migratory Bird Regulations – Proposed

The 2012 early migratory bird season proposals include an additional week of hunting for RMP sandhill cranes, relative to 2011. Season dates would change for mid-continent cranes due to calendar progression with no change in season length. Additionally, a permit quota is proposed for the new Broadwater County hunt area and there is a proposed adjustment to the 380-01 quota:

- Add one week to the RMP crane season. Proposed dates for RMP sandhill cranes (special drawn permits): September 8-September 30
- Season dates for mid-continent sandhill cranes: Sept. 29– Nov. 25
- Increase 380-01 (Dillon/Twin Bridges area) permits from 75 to 100
- New Broadwater County RMP crane hunting area (390-01) quota: 10 permits

2012 Deer Quotas Outside Biennial Ranges - Final

Below are proposed changes from 2011 deer quotas and biennial ranges (MD = mule deer). All other deer quotas will be unchanged from 2011 levels. Proposals **highlighted in grey** are outside the biennial quota range.

MULE DEER

212-00: Increase B licenses from 50 to 150	213-00: Increase B licenses from 25 to 100
311-01: Decrease B licenses from 300 to 200	313-00: Decrease B licenses from 150 to 20
313-01: Decrease B licenses from 100 to 40	313-02: Decrease B licenses from 75 to 25
314-00: Decrease B licenses from 300 to 75	315-00: Decrease B licenses from 250 to 70
317-00: Decrease B licenses from 125 to 30	320-00: Decrease B licenses from 50 to 25
322-00: Decrease B licenses from 50 to 25	324-00: Decrease B licenses from 50 to 25
325-00: Decrease B licenses from 100 to 25	326-00: Decrease B licenses from 100 to 25
330-00: Decrease B licenses from 75 to 25	333-00: Decrease B licenses from 50 to 25
393-00: Decrease B licenses from 200 to 50	400-00: Decrease B licenses from 500 to 200
401-00: Decrease B licenses from 400 to 200	404-00: Decrease B licenses from 900 to 400
405-00: Increase B licenses from 200 to 400	406-00: Decrease B licenses from 400 to 100
413-00: Increase B licenses from 25 to 150	424-00: Decrease B licenses from 25 to 10
445-00: Increase B licenses from 100 to 150	560-00: Decrease B licenses from 250 to 100
570-00: Decrease B licenses from 100 to 50	575-00: Decrease B licenses from 250 to 50
580-00: Decrease B licenses from 250 to 100	600-00: Decrease B licenses from 400 to 300

680-00: Decrease B licenses from 500 to 300

797-00: Decrease B licenses from 500 to 100

520-00: Decrease B Licenses from 150 to 50

007-13: Decrease from 2,500 to 1,000

502-00: Decrease B Licenses from 300 to 50

300-00: Decrease B Licenses from 100 to 75

WHITE-TAILED DEER

121-00: Increase B licenses from 100 to 200

311-00: Increase B licenses from 50 to 100

598-00: Decrease B licenses from 2,250 to 1,750

333-10: Decrease the number of B licenses that can be purchased over-the-counter from 5 to 2

124-00: Increase B licenses from 100 to 200

597-00: Decrease B license from 600 to 150

2012 Antelope Quotas Outside Biennial Ranges - Final

Below are proposed changes from 2011 antelope quotas and biennial ranges. All other antelope quotas will be unchanged from 2011 levels or adjusted within current biennial ranges. Proposals highlighted in grey are outside the biennial quota range.

Region 7

- 700-00: Decrease Either Sex licenses from 6,500 to 3,000
- 700-10: Decrease Dow/Fawn licenses from 500 to 100